



Press Release

Immediate Release

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Impact Teen Drivers Program Aims to Save Teen Lives

Contest for schools and teens announced at National Teen Driver Safety Week event

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Top education, law enforcement, traffic safety leaders and others joined today to announce steps to reduce teen deaths from distracted and reckless driving through the Impact Teen Drivers awareness and education program. It includes a new contest for teens and schools, called Create Real IMPACT grants, that encourages teens to create meaningful messages for other teens about being safe behind the wheel.

Commissioner Joe Farrow of the California Highway Patrol (CHP) notes, "Our officers tell us one of the most stressful parts of their job is when they have to tell the parents of a teen that their child was killed in an automobile crash. We are proud to play a role in this educational program to reduce collisions, save teens from injury or death, and keep a parent or family member from receiving heartbreaking news." Driving deaths are the number one killer of teens; and the most frequent causes are distracted and reckless driving. "Crash data demonstrate that more action is needed," added Commissioner Farrow. "In addition to the high rate of teen drivers who are involved in a crash in their first year of driving, the fatal crash risk per mile driven by 16-year-olds is twice that of 18 to 19-year-olds, and about seven times the risk for drivers ages 30-59."

"The Impact Teen Drivers program is doing something unique by partnering with educators, law enforcement, parents, teens and community members to change teen driving behavior and prevent these unnecessary tragedies," said Carolyn Doggett, executive director of the California Teachers Association (CTA), one of the founding sponsors of Impact Teen Drivers. "This is an extremely smart approach: using teens to get critically important messages to their peers. This is a win-win; the teen or classroom developing the message wins a grant for their school, and classmates win by hearing a message that will change their driving behavior."

National Teen Driver Safety Week: Today's announcement coincides with National Teen Driver Safety Week, which began October 18. High school teachers are being empowered by Impact Teen Drivers to promote teen safe driving and get their classes involved in developing teen safe driving messages by participating in the Create Real Impact grants contest. Up to thirty \$1,000 grants to high schools and individual prize packages are available for the teen winners. Grants will be awarded to high schools whose students find innovative and creative ways to use the Impact Teen Drivers program or materials in video, music, art, speech, or writing

formats. From a PSA put together in a video production class to an essay, Impact Teen Drivers will reward original and inventive ways teens reach other teens and help them make good decisions behind the wheel.

“The Create Real Impact grants are about empowering teens to promote the safe driving message, which we believe is fundamental in causing a sustained behavior shift,” said Kelly Browning, executive director of Impact Teen Drivers. “This isn’t about bad kids doing bad things, but good kids making poor choices. One poor choice can alter or end their lives forever.”

Two New Websites: Impact Teen Drivers has also launched two new websites: **ImpactTeenDrivers.org** for parents and teachers, and **WhatDoYouConsiderLethal.com** for teens. The websites provide resources for teachers, interactive learning tools, fast facts, an interactive wall to create memorials for friends lost in collisions, details about the Create Real Impact grants contest, and a blog written by teens affected by distracted driving. These sites are also linked to the California DMV’s website, **dmv.ca.gov**. Impact Teen Drivers also uses social media (MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and Linked In) to promote the teen safe driving message by reaching teens where they communicate.

Sponsors of Impact Teen Drivers include the CTA, California Association of Highway Patrolmen and California Casualty. Other supporters include the CHP, DMV, California State Firefighters Association, the Peace Officers Research Association of California, and the Association of California Schools Administrators. The program has a number of volunteers, including students who served as advisors in developing the program materials, teachers and parents of teens killed in crashes.

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